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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2009

In Today's Papers

Ambassador Jeffrey Comments on Kurdish Issue and Nabucco-South Stream

Mainstream Aksam carried an interview with Ambassador Jeffrey highlighting his comments on Kurdish initiative and past experiences from American history. Followings are the main highlights from Ambassador Jeffrey's interview as appeared in Aksam on August 8 and 9:

"The current Kurdish initiative is very important. Turkey is the most powerful and stable country in the region. Any strength within domestic issues makes Turkey a powerful actor in the international arena."

"The U.S. tried to tackle its own domestic issues in 1960s. Watergate and the shameful practices against African Americans weakened us and had a negative impact on U.S. decisions regarding international issues. Had we dealt with these domestic problems better, we would have been able to formulate a better strategy regarding Vietnam."

"Currently the U.S., Turkey, Iraq and the Iraqi KRG are working toward isolating the PKK. The first steps in the fight against the PKK were military in nature, but more needs to be done. A terrorist movement cannot be fully concluded without taking social, economic, political and psychological measures."

"The Turkish government is taking good steps on the Kurdish issue. This is a Turkish plan, not an American plan. We are also waiting to find out the details. How to proceed on dealing with the problem is entirely up to the Turkish political system."

"Our message to the DTP is to distance itself from the use of violence as much as possible. Democracy and the power of the weapon are not mutually compatible. Our suggestion to everyone is to stand by democracy."

"We think Turkey's strong commitment to the Nabucco project is very important and we believe that moving forward on this project will be the right decision. It is Russia's right to sell its gas to Europe

but we are concerned over the fact that Russian gas is controlled by a state monopoly and thus strategic interests can be mixed with commercial interests. Natural gas should be a commercial product that benefits everyone."

Will South Stream Be Useful for Turkey? (Hurriyet)

Monday's mainstream Hurriyet reports Zeyno Baran of the Hudson Institute told the EU Observer that if the South Stream pipeline is constructed, the "Nabucco Pipeline project will not happen, at least for Caspian gas," and, "By signing the South Stream agreement, Turkey has shown that it does not care about the diversification of Europe's gas supply or freeing the countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus from Russian influence. The Europeans must see how close Turkey has moved toward Russia," emphasized Baran.

Hurriyet also carries Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu comments from an interview with Kanal 7, "Turkey has freed itself from the Cold War mentality. There shouldn't be any reactions coming from the Europeans." Davutoglu added, "There is need for a gas and oil pipeline from the north toward south, and it is rational, and not ideologically motivated, behavior for Turkey to see it pass through its soil." Davutoglu also stressed both Nabucco and the South Stream projects would carry on.

Editorials on Energy Pipelines

Erdal Saglam wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The Turkish government has put forward strong steps for the sake of political favoritism and the recent deal has made Turkey even more dependent on Moscow than ever before. We will see the consequences of this crucial

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mistake later. Diversifying energy routes for Turkey was given as the main excuse for the recent energy deals with Russia but this does not give enough justification."

Hakan Albayrak wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "It shows Turkey's immense strength and powerful diplomacy that Ankara is now capable of making energy deals with Russia while it becomes a part of Nabucco at the same time. Turkish diplomacy enjoys a fully independent attitude as this strong NATO member country can establish strong ties with Iran as well. Similarly Turkey's commitment to the EU and its commitment to an expanded relationship with Syria are happening in parallel to each other."

Omer Taspinar wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Thanks to the South Stream project, Russia has now obtained the power to cut off gas flow to Ukraine whenever it wants to. Such a situation in Ukraine will certainly have an impact on the entire region as well as will have a negative impact on U.S. interests. Individually speaking, Ankara will benefit from being an energy terminal instead of a transit route. Yet in the end of this energy game, Moscow is the winner by managing to bypass EU and the U.S. and by making Ukraine fully dependent on Russia."

President Gul on The Kurdish Initiative

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah: President Gul talked to journalists en route to Ankara from Bitlis. Mainstream Hurriyet reports Gul said "Let us look at the realities. This is the most important issue of Turkey today. I am pleased to hear ongoing debates on the issue and to see that the point of view is gradually changing." Mainstream Sabah also quotes Gul as saying, "We should not hide our heads in the sand. There is a historic opportunity to solve the Kurdish issue. There are many developments that inspire optimism. The political jargon has changed. The citizens want to solve the problem. We should take advantage of these developments which are the result of deep and intense efforts." Milliyet highlights Gul referred to the Kurdish literature masterpiece "Mem u Zen" as part of Turkish culture.

Sunday papers widely covered President Gul's speech in Bitlis. Speaking at a ceremony in Bitlis Gul said "Many mistakes were made in the past and all that should end. Democracy leaves room for the free expression of different views without causing divisions and fighting. All citizens of Turkey have equal rights. Good will, effort and a constructive approach are needed to solve the problems.

Sunday's Vatan reports that Gul undertook a critical step amid debates about possibilities for restoring the Kurdish names of the villages in the Southeast and referred to Guroymak town with its Kurdish name "Norsin".

Opposition Leaders' Reaction to Gul's Comments

Vatan, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak , Tercuman and others: MHP leader Devlet Bahceli, who attended his party's convention in Antalya, criticized President Gul for calling Bitlis' Guroyak district by its former Kurdish name, "Norsin." Bahceli said, "The Turkish Republic's president is responding to PKK demands before even establishing any democratic opening. Will you call Istanbul Constantinople next?" Bahceli also said the government's project is planned in order to divide and break up the country. The government is carrying out what terrorist leader Ocalan could not do with arms, through initiatives they call a democratic opening.

Liberal Radikal reports that CHP leader Baykal, attending the Dadaloglu cultural festivities in Kayseri, said "Everybody can have an ethnic identity by nature and everybody of course has a lineage. It is an honor for one to embrace and protect his/her ethnic identity. But, our ethnic identities should not lead us to feel enmity and hatred to other ethnic identities. We will love and respect each other. We will never forget that we are members of the Turkish nation."

Mehsud: Pakistan's "Man With Seven Lives" (Radikal)

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Liberal Radikal notes there is confusion over whether a U.S. drone attack killed Pakistan's Taliban Chief Baitullah Mehsud, "Whether Mehsud is dead or alive remains a mystery," as, "He has almost turned into a literary character as if he is a man with seven lives." While Pakistani officials confirmed his death after a missile attack from the CIA's unmanned drone, Mehsud's assistant Hakimullah Mesud denied his death to the BBC, added Radikal. The paper also quoted U.S. NSC Adviser James Jones as saying, "Baitullah's death is 90 percent confirmed," yet the report stated there was a lack of clarity about Mehsud's status.

Mainstream Hurriyet focuses on "the inner power struggle within the Taliban after the death of Baitullah Mehsud." Hurriyet notes that the U.S. "seems certain about his death," and the Taliban "is trying to gain some time by denying the reports regarding Mehsud until the Taliban in Pakistan can find a new leader."

Obama Sends A Letter to Syrian President Asad

Mainstream Sabah cites the Lebanese daily Al Akhbar report that President Obama "sent a three-page letter to Syrian leader Asad last month urging for dialogue and for mutual contribution to the Middle East peace process." Reportedly, U.S. Middle East envoy George Mitchell delivered the letter during his visit to Damascus.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- CHP leader Deniz Baykal said the government did not care about solving the problems of the Turkish people, and added that the AKP government will collapse in the next elections.
- One soldier is killed and two others are wounded in a skirmish with the PKK terrorists in the province of Hatay.
- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said the government's Kurdish Initiative was a historic move for the unification of Turkey.
- Over the first seven months of the year, 20,226 Turkish workers went to work abroad.
- The Memur-Sen union of civil servants demands 11 percent wage hike on the eve of collective bargaining talks with the government.

World

- Iran has confirmed it has three American hikers in custody. The

Americans strayed into Iran while hiking in the mountains of Kurdish territory in neighboring Iraq.

- Three small bombs explode in places frequented by tourists in the capital of the Spanish island of Mallorca.

- A woman visiting a Shiite shrine in southern Iraq has died of swine flu, making it the first death from the virus in the country.

JEFFREY